9 February 1965

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Briefing of Defense Subcommittee of House Appropriations,
8 February 1965

1. This briefing dealt entirely with the situation in Vietnam. After the formal presentation, the questions involved:

a. The reasons for lack of progress in South Vietnam.

b. The lack of warning in the case of the Pleiku attack.

c. The background and probable North Vietnam and ChiCom reaction to our retaliatory air strike.

d. The estimate of the situation in South Vietnam.

e. The result if we pulled out of South Vietnam.

f. The chances of and prerequisites for a negotiated settlement.

g. The reasons for some previous optimistic statements in prior briefings.

2. The Director's responses generally were:

a. The difficulty in South Vietnam to get the leaders to lay aside their differences and unite in their common anti-Communist interest so that there would be continuity in government and the people could have confidence in it.

b. The probability that the strike north would give the North Vietnamese some reason to pause although it is possible they might strike back and the Viet Cong may do something dramatic.

c. The estimate on the whole that there were more reasons to be pessimistic than optimistic in considering the future in South Vietnam but that the situation was not hopeless and that this estimate had been a constant intelligence position in prior briefings.

d. In connection with the pull out, he dwelt on the domino theory, saying he felt it was an unfortunate phrase and misrepresented the situation; on the lack of warning at Pleiku, he pointed out the lack of effectiveness of the South Vietnamese intelligence service and the lack of information from the natives due to the terrorism of the Viet Cong; on negotiated settlement, he pointed out the prior need for a position of strength.

3. A summary of questions and answers is attached. These are for the most part condensed and not exact quotations. The full text is available if desired.

s/ Lawrence R. Houston

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Attachment